

# **HB 1363 2025 Baltimore City Mayor's Commission on**

Uploaded by: Adam Levine

Position: FAV

February 28, 2025

**TO:** Members of the House Economic Matters Committee

**FROM:** Baltimore City Mayor’s Commission on Disabilities

**RE:** **House Bill 1363 – Places of Public Accommodation – Captioning Motion Pictures Houses – Alterations**

Hearing Date: Monday, March 4, 2025

**POSITION: Support**

Chair Wilson, Vice-Chair Crosby, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Mayor’s Commission on Disabilities **supports House Bill 1363 – Places of Public Accommodation – Motion Pictures Houses – Captioning.**

The reason for this bill is simple – without it, no cinema in Baltimore City would have to offer any open-captioning screenings. Open-captioning means that Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons can read the dialogue on the big screen rather than use small captioning devices which, of course, interfere with the main reason why people still go the cinema. This bill makes Baltimore City theaters more accessible and inclusive.

Last session, we were delighted that the General Assembly enacted HB 426/SB 92, which requires certain motion picture houses to provide at least two open-caption movie screenings per week for the first three weeks of a movie premier. The motion picture house can select which two screenings to suit its business purposes. During the legislative process, the bill was amended so that it only applies to a motion picture house with at least eight screens. This means that only the very largest motion picture houses are subject to this requirement and in Baltimore City the most popular and well-attended locations are exempt. This bill would simply reduce from eight screens to four screens those motion picture houses affected.

We respectfully believe that this will better serve the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community, including many of our seniors, so that they too can fully enjoy the big screen experience. Over time, we anticipate that two open-captioning screenings per week will draw viewers who would otherwise stay home to watch a movie. It is our hope that this would both increase business and serve the cause of better accessibility.

This bill would alter the number of screens in a motion picture house above which the motion picture house is required to provide open movie captioning; requiring that each motion picture house that is a place of public accommodation report to the Commission on Civil Rights and the Attorney General on the number of screenings each month in which certain captions were used; and generally relating to movie captioning in motion picture houses.

At present, under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”), motion picture houses are required to provide closed captioning access for Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons, which

means small individual devices so that each person can read the dialogue as the movie plays on the big screen. But, as you can imagine, this is an awkward way to experience a film that was intended to be enjoyed on the big screen as one seamless experience.

The proposed requirement for open captioning for two screenings per week would mean that the dialogue would be displayed on the big screen. While there is some resistance to this for fear of an adverse financial impact, our investigation suggests that such screenings, particularly if offered at the more attractive times, would actually increase the overall audience because it would also be more accessible to seniors and persons for whom English is a second language. Having the dialogue on the big screen enhances the movie-going experience for a variety of individuals.

We therefore respectfully request a **favorable** report on House Bill 1363

**HB 1363 - DRM - 2025 - FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Audrey Sellers

Position: FAV

**ECONOMIC MATTERS COMMITTEE**  
**HB 1363: PLACES OF PUBLIC ACCOMMODATION - CAPTIONING FOR MOTION PICTURE**  
**HOUSES - ALTERATIONS**  
**MARCH 4, 2025**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM – formerly Maryland Disability Law Center) is the designated Protection and Advocacy agency in Maryland, mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities. DRM thanks the Committee for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of House Bill 1363: Places of Public Accommodation - Captioning for Motion Picture Houses – Alterations.

HB 1363 seeks to lower the threshold for mandatory open captioning from theaters with eight or more screens to those with four or more screens. It requires these venues to provide open captioning for at least two screenings of each motion picture per week and to report the number of open and closed captioning screenings to the state. Last session, legislation was passed requiring that at least four showings of open-captioned films be provided weekly by certain movie theaters. State and local laws requiring that movie theaters provide open captioning are increasingly common throughout the nation. New York’s City Council passed a bill, which went into effect in 2022, requiring some movie theaters to offer at least 25% of all showings to be open-captioned.<sup>1</sup> In comparison, Maryland has taken a more cautious approach, which may make compliance easier for movie theaters. Open captioning benefits many groups, including Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, older adults with hearing loss, and neurodivergent individuals.

Although Title III “Public Accommodations and Commercial Facilities” of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law over 30 years ago, movie theater patrons with disabilities still have not achieved equal enjoyment of this public accommodation. The applicable law under 28 CFR § 36.202(b) states:

“A public accommodation shall not afford an individual or class of individuals, on the basis of a disability or disabilities of such individual or class, directly, or through contractual, licensing, or other arrangements, with the opportunity to participate in or benefit from a good, service, facility, privilege, advantage, or accommodation that is not equal to that afforded to other individuals.”

Pursuant to a Final Rule issued in 2016 by the U.S. Department of Justice, movie theaters are required to provide captioning technology to patrons with disabilities.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.nyc.gov/site/mome/about/open-captions>.

<sup>2</sup> See [https://www.ada.gov/regs2016/movie\\_rule.htm](https://www.ada.gov/regs2016/movie_rule.htm)

When this rule was issued, Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals gained greater access to the public pastime of seeing movies in theaters. However, closed captioning is the most commonly provided option. Time has shown that closed captioning is insufficient as the sole auxiliary aid available to moviegoers with disabilities. Closed captioning devices provided to movie theater guests frequently malfunction, causing patrons to miss essential dialogue while seeking a repair or replacement. Oftentimes the technology fails to function properly at all.

Under ADA obligations, a movie theater may fulfill its obligation to provide captioning “through any technology so long as that technology provides communication as effective as that provided to movie patrons without disabilities.”<sup>3</sup> However, since closed captioning devices are often unreliable, theaters may instead choose to “use open movie captioning as an alternative to complying with the requirements.”<sup>4</sup>

Maryland has joined other states implementing similar disability rights legislation to align with Title III of the ADA. Now that last year’s legislation has been successfully implemented, it is time to expand that access to open captioning for the benefit of people with disabilities, older adults, children, English language learners, and others who rely on captions for an engaging moviegoing experience.

For these reasons, DRM supports House Bill 1363. If you have any questions regarding DRM’s testimony, please contact me using the information in my signature below. I appreciate the Committee’s time and consideration in reviewing our testimony.

Respectfully,

Audrey Sellers  
Advocate  
Disability Rights Maryland

1500 Union Ave, Ste. 2000  
Baltimore, MD 21211  
Phone: 443-692-2507  
Email: AudreyS@DisabilityRightsMD.org

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<sup>3</sup> 28 CFR § 36.303(d)(6)(i)

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at (d)(6)(ii)

# **BCAD HB 1363 Open Captioned Movies Bill.pdf**

Uploaded by: BCAD BCAD

Position: FAV



March 4, 2025

Economic Matters Committee  
State Capitol  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Economic Matters Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Baltimore City Association of the Deaf (BCAD) to express our support for HB 1363 - Places of Public Accommodation – Captioning for Motion Picture Houses – Alterations, sponsored by Delegate Harry Bhandari. This bill mandates that motion picture houses with fewer than eight screens provide open captioning for at least two screenings each week.

The BCAD Board strongly believes that this bill will significantly benefit the diverse population of Baltimore City, including children and adults learning to read, senior citizens, veterans, individuals with learning or developmental disabilities, English language learners, and the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities.

Not only will this bill benefit the residents of Baltimore City, but it will also provide greater accessibility to movie theaters across the state. This includes areas such as the Eastern Shore, Western Maryland, and other counties where movie theaters do not currently offer open captioned films. By lowering the threshold for open captioned screenings, this bill will make more theaters across Maryland accessible to a wider range of people, regardless of location.

Currently, there are no movie theaters in Baltimore City that are required to provide open captioned screenings, as the existing law mandates that theaters must have eight or more screens. This bill will lower the threshold to accommodate four theaters in the city that would be required to offer open captioned films:

- **Senator Theatre** – 4 screens
- **Charles Theatre** – 5 screens
- **Harbor East Cinemas** – 7 screens
- **Warehouse Cinemas Rotunda** – 7 screens



Many community members have expressed the difficulty of having to travel at least 30 minutes outside of Baltimore City to access open captioned movies. If this bill is passed, it would allow individuals to enjoy these screenings at theaters just a few minutes away, either by car or on foot.

Implementing this law will ensure open captioned movies are available to everyone in the community. We believe that the impact on movie theaters will be minimal. Offering two open captioned screenings per week will not significantly affect operations, as theaters will not need to hire additional staff to accommodate captioning. In fact, the change will likely attract more moviegoers, as individuals from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community, as well as those who benefit from captioning, will have a convenient and accessible option to enjoy films.

This bill presents a win/win situation for both moviegoers and theaters alike. It ensures inclusivity and provides greater access to entertainment, benefiting people of all backgrounds.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. We appreciate your support for HB 1363 and for making our community more accessible to everyone.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jacob Leffler". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Jacob Leffler  
President  
bcadeaf2020@gmail.com

**IL Written Testimony - HB 1363 - Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Chris Kelter

Position: FAV



**HB 1363: Places of Public Accommodation - Captioning for Motion Picture Houses -  
Alterations**

**Testimony of the Maryland Independent Living Network**

**SUPPORT – Favorable**

House Economic Matters Committee, March 4, 2025

The Maryland Independent Living Network is a coalition of the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council and the seven Maryland-based Centers for Independent Living (CIL). CILs are created by federal law. CILs work to enhance the civil rights and quality of services for people with disabilities. There are seven CILs located throughout Maryland, operated by and for people with disabilities. CILs provide Information and Referral, Advocacy, Peer Support, Independent Living Skills training, and Transition Services to individuals with disabilities in their communities.

House Bill 1363 reduces from 8 to 4 the number of screens a movie theater has that is subject to the requirement to provide closed captioning for at least two screenings for each motion picture it shows each week. HB 1363 also requires movie theaters to provide monthly reports on the number of showings with closed captioning.

The Maryland Independent Living Network strongly **supports** HB 1363 and requests a favorable report.

In 2024, HB 426/SB 92, Places of Public Accommodation - Motion Picture Houses – Captioning, were enacted and established the requirement that movie theaters with at least 8 screens provide closed captioning for at least two screenings for each motion picture it shows each week. This new law increased accessibility in the screening of movies in Maryland.

HB 1363 would increase the number of movie theaters that are subject to this requirement by requiring movie theaters with at least 4 screens meet the requirement established by HB 426/SB 92 of 2024.

As a result, HB 1363 increases the accessibility of movie screenings. Any increase in accessibility is good for everyone.

The Maryland Independent Living Network strongly **supports** HB 1363 and requests a favorable report.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

**Contact Information:**

Chris Kelter, Executive Director  
Accessible Resources for Independence  
443-713-3914  
[ckelter@arinow.org](mailto:ckelter@arinow.org)

Danielle Bustos, MDYLF Coordinator  
Independence Now  
240-898-2189  
[dbustos@innow.org](mailto:dbustos@innow.org)

**ALDA HB 1363 Letter.pdf**

Uploaded by: MDAD President MDAD President

Position: FAV



Maryland Open Captioning Movies &lt;mdopencaptioning@gmail.com&gt;

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## HB 1363 Open Captioned Movies Bill Amendment

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**ALDA President** <president@alda.org>

Fri, Feb 28, 2025 at 12:31 PM

To: Maryland Open Captioning Movies &lt;mdopencaptioning@gmail.com&gt;, Howard Rosenblum - Deaf Equality &lt;howard.rosenblum@deafequality.org&gt;

Subject: Support for Maryland Open-Captioned Movies Bill (HB 1363)

Dear Maryland Open-Captioned Movies Bill Committee,

I, Diane McDonagh, President of ALDA (Association of Late-Deafened Adults), fully support the Maryland Open-Captioned Movies Bill (HB 1363). Equal access to movies is essential for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Late-Deafened communities, ensuring that everyone has the same opportunity to enjoy films without barriers.

On behalf of ALDA, we stand in support of this bill and advocate for accessible and inclusive entertainment for all.

Sincerely,  
Diane McDonagh  
President, ALDA

CC: Howard Rosenblum(Advocacy Chair, ALDA)

**Diane McDonagh**

ALDA President

[President@alda.org](mailto:President@alda.org)<http://alda.org>

[Quoted text hidden]

**DILA HB 1363 Support Letter.pdf**

Uploaded by: MDAD President MDAD President

Position: FAV



February 25, 2025

Delegate Sheree Samples-Hughes  
Maryland General Assembly

RE: House Bill 1363 Places of Public Accommodation - Captioning for Motion Picture Houses -  
Alterations

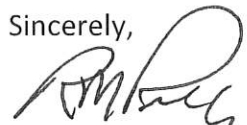
Dear Delegate Samples-Hughes,

As a human service provider for deaf and hard-of-hearing individual, we encourage you to support HB1363. We believe that the time has come due to ensure that movie theaters provide more open captioned movie options, since there are currently very limited options when theaters decide for themselves on a voluntary basis.

Its currently very difficult for individuals with hearing loss to enjoy going to the movie theater as the captioning equipment offered either doesn't work, not enough devices are available and is distracting not only to the individual using it when it malfunctions, but those surrounding them. Having open captions eliminates the frustration.

Open captioning also assists other types of disabilities other than hearing loss. Everyone deserves to have equal access.

Sincerely,



R. Michael Purkey  
Executive Director



# HCAD House Bill 1363.pdf

Uploaded by: MDAD President MDAD President

Position: FAV



**February 27, 2025**

**House Bill 1363**

***Places of Public Accommodation - Captioning for Motion Pictures Houses - Alterations***

**Economic Matters Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

On behalf of the Howard County Association of the Deaf (HCAD), we respectfully urge your support for **House Bill 1363 – the Open Captioning Bill**, sponsored by Delegate Harry Bhandari. This bill would require all motion picture houses to offer open captioning for each screening at movie theaters that hold four or more screenings of a film.

Currently, Maryland law mandates open captioning only for theaters with eight or more screenings, limiting access for the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community. Reducing the threshold to four screenings will significantly expand accessibility, particularly in smaller and rural counties outside the metropolitan area, where options for captioned screenings are even more limited.

For these reasons, HCAD respectfully requests a **favorable report** on HB 1363.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**The Board of the Howard County Association of the Deaf**

# **MDAD Letter Written Testimony HB 1363.pdf**

Uploaded by: MDAD President MDAD President

Position: FAV



**Maryland Association of the Deaf**  
**Written Testimony**  
**HB 1363 – Places of Public Accommodation - Captioning for**  
**Motion Picture Houses - Alterations**  
**Tuesday, March 4, 2025**  
**Position: Favorable**

**President**

Tina Joyner

The Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD) is a statewide organization that protects the interests of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Marylanders concerning accessibility and equity issues. Currently, there are approximately 1.2 million of these individuals living in the State of Maryland.

**Vice President**

Jacob Leffler

MDAD is advocating for the passage of the HB 1363 sponsored by Delegate Bhandari regarding movie theater captioning. This bill requires that movie theaters with four or more screens provide open captioning for a minimum of two screenings each week. This effort would help further expand access to open captioned (OC) movies particularly in Western Maryland, North Central Maryland, Southern Maryland, and Eastern Shore areas. In addition, Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing customers and/or those with neurodivergent conditions from the surrounding states of Delaware, District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia would more likely patronize the theaters in these areas. They will bring in additional revenue into the State of Maryland beyond its borders.

**Secretary**

Tiasha Bera

**Treasurer**

Allysa Dittmar

**Board Members**

Meredith DeSomma

Vikki Porter

Blaise Delahoussaye

Philip Mecham

Thelma Schroeder

It is vital that the State of Maryland continues to take the helm in ensuring that movie theaters provide open captioning accessibility. The practice of providing closed captioning devices (glasses et al) has historically been riddled with numerous and documented issues such as malfunctions and physical/mental wear and tear for users. These devices have been proven to not contribute at all to an enjoyable and inclusive movie-going experience—stripping users of the ability to remain invisible and maintain their dignity.

As a reminder, open captioned movies benefit not just the Deaf/DeafBlind/Hard of Hearing customers and those with neurodivergent conditions, but a larger segment of the movie-going public—including but not limited to—children, senior citizens, and those learning English as a second language. MDAD looks forward to a favorable report on HB 1363.

Thank you,

MDAD Board of Directors

**MDCC HB 1363 Letter.pdf**

Uploaded by: MDAD President MDAD President

Position: FAV



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PO Box 4131  
Frederick, MD 21705

240-560-5028

[www.deafmdcc.org](http://www.deafmdcc.org)

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Linda Stoltz

Vice-President  
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Board Members  
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Kevin Johnson  
Joe Ortiz  
Alex Simmons

March 1, 2025

Dear Members of Economic Matters Committee and the State of Maryland Legislation

The Board of the Maryland Deaf Community (MDCC) strongly encourages you all to support House Bill 1363 (Open Captioning Movie Bill) for the benefit of the deaf community in the state of Maryland. This bill will provide accessibility for all people of hearing loss that needs to read captions on film.. For years, people with hearing loss were not able to enjoy the benefits of watching movies on the big screen and then later they needed to wear cumbersome devices to read captions and now there is open captioning like what we have on tv shows. This gives the people who have hearing loss full accessibility just like their hearing peers.

Please support HB 1363.

Sincerely,

Mary Lynn Lally Secretary of MDCC Board

Linda Stoltz, President of MDCC Board

# **MDCC HB 1363 Open Captioned Movies Bill.pdf**

Uploaded by: MDAD President MDAD President

Position: FAV



PO Box 4131  
Frederick, MD 21705

240-560-5028

[www.deafmdcc.org](http://www.deafmdcc.org)

President  
Linda Stoltz

Vice-President  
Lori Bonheyo

Secretary  
MaryLynn Lally

Corresponding Secretary  
Joshua Finkle

Treasurer  
Lawrence Cohen

Board Members  
Marsha Flowers  
Kevin Johnson  
Joe Ortiz  
Alex Simmons

**March 1, 2025**

Dear Members of Economic Matters Committee and the State  
Legislation

The Board of the Maryland Deaf Community Center (MDCC) strongly encourages you all to support House Bill 1363 (Open Captioning Movie Bill) for the benefit of the deaf community in the state of Maryland. This bill will provide accessibility for all people with hearing loss that needs to read captions on film. For years, people with hearing loss were not able to enjoy the benefits of watching movies on the big screen and then later they needed to wear cumbersome devices to read captions and now there is open captioning like what we have on tv shows. This gives the people who have hearing loss full accessibility just like their hearing peers.  
Please support HB 1363.

Sincerely,

Mary Lynn Lally, Secretary of MDCC Board  
Linda  
Stoltz, President of MDCC Board

<b>To</b>	Person  Person  Person
<b>Cc</b>	Person
<b>Bcc</b>	Person
<b>Subject</b>	



# **MDSC Support for Open Captioning Bill 1363.pdf**

Uploaded by: MDAD President MDAD President

Position: FAV



# MDSC

## Maryland Deaf Senior Citizens

[www.mddeafseniors.org](http://www.mddeafseniors.org)

2024-2025

### Officers

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*President*

**Michael H. Weinstock**  
*Vice President*

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*Community Enhancement*

**Sam Sonnenstrahl**  
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**Barry White**  
*Media*

February 28, 2025

House Bill 1363  
Places of Public Accommodation-Captioning for Motion Pictures  
Houses-Alterations  
Economic Matters Committee  
State Capitol  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Economic Matters Committee,

On behalf of the Maryland Deaf Senior Citizens, Inc, we respectfully urge your support for House Bill 1363, the Open Captioning Bill, sponsored by Delegate Harry Bhandari. This bill would require all motion picture houses to offer open captioning for each screening at movie theatres that hold four or more screenings of a film.

Currently Maryland law mandates open captioning for movie theatres with eight or more screenings, limiting access for members of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. Mandating movie theatres with four or more screenings will significantly expand accessibility, particularly in smaller and rural countries outside the metropolitan areas.

This bill presents a win-win situation for both the moviegoers and theatres alike. It ensures inclusivity and provides greater access to entertainment for everyone.

Maryland Deaf Senior Citizens, Inc respectfully request a favorable report on HB1363.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

With warm regards,

*Janet Weinstock*  
Janet Weinstock  
MDSC President

*Lisa Skaggs*  
Lisa Skaggs  
MDSC Secretary

Maryland Deaf Senior Citizens, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization.  
All contributions are tax deductible to the extent of the law.

**MSADA HB 1363 Letter.pdf**

Uploaded by: MDAD President MDAD President

Position: FAV



Judicial Proceedings Committee  
State Capitol  
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 28, 2025

Dear Economic Matters Committee,

My name is Payal Sweet, the Acting President of Metro South Asian Deaf Association. I respectfully request that you support HB 1363 - Open Captioning Bill, sponsored by Delegate Harry Bhandari.

It proposes changing the number of movie theater screens from 8 to 4. This would allow moviegoers to enjoy OC movies more smoothly at movie theaters with 4 or more screens, rather than requiring theaters with 8 or more screens. This change would benefit moviegoers in Southern MD, Western MD, and other regions.

It ensures a compliant resolution to make movie theaters adhere to Maryland law, with fines or penalties for non-compliance. (We have already established an office to oversee complaints and have included an amendment that allows moviegoers to directly submit complaints to the office. Action would be taken immediately to instruct movie theaters to comply with the law or face fines or penalties.)

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter and I appreciate your support on HB 1363 .

Peacefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Payal Sweet'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Metro South Asian Deaf Association (MSADA) Acting President

**MSD C - PTCA - HB1363.pdf**

Uploaded by: MDAD President MDAD President

Position: FAV

MSD  
Columbia  
P·T·C·A·

Parent, Teacher, Community Association

March 4, 2025

Dear Maryland Legislators,

I am Meredith DeSomma, proudly serving as the President of the Maryland School for the Deaf (MSD) - Columbia Parent, Teacher, Community Association (PTCA). I am writing on behalf of the PTCA to express our support for HB 1363, titled "Places of Public Accommodation – Captioning for Motion Picture Houses; Alterations," sponsored by Delegate Harry Bhandari. This important bill requires motion picture houses with fewer than eight screens to provide open captioning for at least two screenings each week.

MSD Columbia serves many students from various counties across Maryland. Many students from areas like Hartford County, Queen Anne's County, St. Mary's County, and Baltimore City, do not have access to movie theaters with eight or more screens, which limits their ability to attend films that lack open captioning. This situation places them at a disadvantage compared to others who have access to theaters that provide this service.

Furthermore, the PTCA community and I strongly believe that this bill will benefit not only our students but also our staff and families, as well as the wider community outside MSD. Open captioning greatly aids children and adults in their language development and literacy skills. Additionally, it supports senior citizens, veterans, the deaf and hard of hearing, as well as individuals with auditory processing disorders and other medical conditions.

We urge you to support HB 1363, "Places of Public Accommodation – Captioning for Motion Picture Houses; Alterations."

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Meredith DeSomma

President, MSD Columbia PTCA

[ptca@msd.edu](mailto:ptca@msd.edu)

# **MSDF PTA Open Captioning Letter.pdf**

Uploaded by: MDAD President MDAD President

Position: FAV



**Maryland School for the Deaf, Frederick  
Parent Staff Association**

101 Clarke Place  
Frederick, Maryland 21701  
[MSDFPSA@gmail.com](mailto:MSDFPSA@gmail.com)  
Website: <https://bit.ly/msdfpsa>

February 25, 2025

To the Maryland Senate and House Committee Members,

On behalf of our organization, I am writing to express my strong support for the implementation of open captions across the state of Maryland (House Bill 1363), particularly in theaters with four or more screens.

Open captions are essential for ensuring that all individuals, including those who are deaf or hard of hearing, can fully participate in and enjoy the movie-going experience. By providing open captions, theaters can make their venues accessible to a wider audience and create a more inclusive environment for all.

In an era where inclusivity and accessibility are increasingly recognized as fundamental rights, it is imperative that theaters take proactive steps to address the needs of individuals with disabilities. Open captions are a simple and effective way to achieve this goal.

Furthermore, open captions benefit not only individuals with hearing loss but also those who may be learning English as a second language or who simply prefer to read along with the dialogue. By providing open captions, theaters can enhance the movie-going experience for everyone.

I urge you to consider the implementation of open captions across Maryland, particularly in theaters with four or more screens. This measure would send a strong message of inclusivity and accessibility, and it would make a significant difference in the lives of many individuals.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

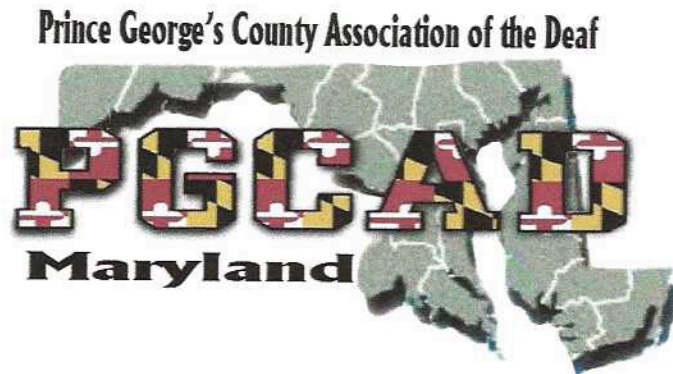
Amanda Amati  
President, MSDF PSA  
Tax #81-5125642



**PGCAD Letter HB 1363.pdf**

Uploaded by: MDAD President MDAD President

Position: FAV



February 27, 2025

Economic Matters Committee  
State Capitol  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Economic Matters Committee:

The Prince George's County Association of the Deaf (PGCAD) in Maryland would like to voice our strong support for HB 1363. The legislation of HB 1363 as currently written will help make Maryland a fair and more inclusive place by helping to ensure that deaf community attend the movie theaters that have equal access to open captioning service and have an enjoyable experience.

The key of this bill is to promote accessibility and ensure there are no barriers for everyone in the deaf community. Everyone knows that something must be done. Waiting any longer will only result in blocking access in movie theaters. We all must accept the obvious solution. Open captioning service at movie theaters is a simple solution for the deaf community.

In addition to moviegoers who are deaf and hard of hearing, open captioning benefits almost everyone, especially people watching movies in their non-native language, and children and adults learning to read. It's more important than ever that movies be inclusive for all.

We appreciate your attention to matters which have a direct bearing on the movie theaters industry.

Sincerely,

Gabrielle Davis  
President

[PGCAD2020@gmail.com](mailto:PGCAD2020@gmail.com)

# **HB1363.Council.Support.pdf**

Uploaded by: Rachel London

Position: FAV



## Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

House Economic Matters Committee

HB 1363: Places of Public Accommodation - Captioning for Motion Picture Houses - Alterations

March 4, 2024

Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) is an independent public policy organization that creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. Our vision is that people with and without disabilities in Maryland live, learn, work, and play together. We support HB 1363 as another important step to ensure more Marylanders can live a life they want with meaningful access to movies in their communities.

### Background

- The federal Americans with Disabilities Act requires places of public accommodation, like movie theaters, to be accessible to people with disabilities. Most movie theaters have closed movie captions systems for people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Closed movie captions provide individual viewers access to captions on a device provided by a movie theater.
- Last year the General Assembly passed HB 426/SB92 which requires movie theaters with eight or more screens to provide open movie captions at least twice a week for each movie in the theater. This is required for **the three weeks following a movie's release**. Open movie captions provide all viewers access to captions on the movie screen.

### WHAT does this legislation do?

- Changes the open movie captions requirement from movie theaters with eight screens to movie theaters with four screens.
- Also requires movie theaters to send a monthly report to the Commission on Civil Rights and Attorney General on the dates and number of times a movies had closed movie captions and open movie captions in the preceding month.

### WHY is this legislation important?

- Video captions benefit everyone. Multiple studies have found that captioned videos increase comprehension, attention, and memory for everyone: children, youth, and adults. Research also finds benefits for people with disabilities, people for whom English is not their first language, and children and adults learning to read.
- A state-wide mandate supports making recreation accessible to everyone, regardless of where they live. The Americans with Disabilities Act and subsequent DOJ rulings have required access to captions in most workplaces and education settings without using an auxiliary device

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Dee Sapp, *Chairperson* • Rachel London, Esq., *Executive Director*

(i.e., a handheld transmitter for captions like those required in close movie captions). This bill expands access to make recreation inclusive for all Marylanders regardless of where they live in the state and which movie theaters are in their communities.

- The current practice of relying on auxiliary devices for closed captions or to arrange for open captions ahead of time in movie theaters creates undue hardship on audience members. A reasonable accommodation is defined as making a place of public accommodation suitable for access, use, and patronage by an individual with a disability without danger to the **individual's health or safety and undue hardship or expense to the person making the accommodation**. Testimony on this bill for the last several years offers repeated examples of the burden on people seeking captions at movie theaters under current practices. This bill will increase accessibility and reduce the burden on patrons.

It is critical that people with disabilities have full access to every recreational option available, without barriers to access or inclusion, including movies. For these reasons, the Council supports HB 1363.

Contact: Dr. Stephanie Dolamore, Deputy Director, [SDolamore@md-council.org](mailto:SDolamore@md-council.org)

**HB 1363\_INFO\_Mid-Atlantic NATO\_3.4.2025.pdf**

Uploaded by: Doug Murdoch

Position: INFO



**HB 1363 – Places of Accommodation – Captioning for Motion Picture Houses -  
Alterations**  
**House Economic Matters Committee**  
**March 4, 2025**

On behalf of Mid-Atlantic NATO, a regional affiliate of the National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO), representing movie theatres throughout Maryland, we respectfully submit these written comments for your consideration on HB 1363.

**Open Captioning in Maryland**

Currently there are 39 locations with 8 screens or more covered by Maryland’s Existing Open Captioning Law, for a total of 473 screens.

HB 1363 would lower the 8 screens threshold to 4, adding an additional 15 locations in the state, with 84 more screens.

Maryland has only two locations with less than 4 screens. Both are non-profit and they do play open captioned shows voluntarily.

With the passage of HB 1363, we estimate that Maryland’s movie theatres will play almost 50,000 Open Caption Showings annually.

A full listing of Maryland Movie Theatres covered by the current law, and those that will be added by HB 1363 is included with these comments for information only.

**Collaboration and Commitment**

Maryland’s movie theaters are committed to access for individuals that are deaf or hard of hearing. For over 25 years, the movie theater industry has collaborated with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, advocacy groups, film studios, and technology developers to achieve access to all feature films at all times.

Movigoers in Maryland seeking captions have the flexibility to view a movie with captions at any showtime, on any day. In 2016, the Department of Justice issued a final rule requiring digital movie theaters to provide closed movie captioning equipment. The DOJ adopted the majority of recommendations set forth in an agreement between the National Association of Theatre Owners and major advocacy groups, including the Hearing Loss Association of America and the National Association of the Deaf. Through these collaborative efforts, today, digital movie theaters in



Maryland offer closed movie captioning devices (allowing text to be viewable by an individual moviegoer) that can be used at any show time for any movie that comes with closed movie captions.

### **State of the Industry**

Movie theatres were devastated by the pandemic and are still trying to recover. Despite slight gains in attendance numbers from when theatres were shuttered due to the pandemic, 2024 box office admissions in Maryland remained at least 27.4% lower for the year than they were in 2019, and even lower than they were the year before in 2023. It will likely take years for Maryland theatres to recover their pandemic related losses and the Hollywood labor strikes only further compounded the issue by limiting new product in 2024.

In the last twenty-four months two large theatre operators closed five significant Maryland locations and since the pandemic numerous other smaller operators left Maryland including ArcLight Cinemas, Bow Tie Cinemas, CMX/CinéBistro, New Vision Theatres, and Northeast/Hoyts Cinema. Most recently, the Regal Theatre in Germantown and the Next Act Theatre in Pikesville closed permanently in December of 2024. The start of 2025 has already been the worst for Maryland's movie theatres in recent years, and theatre film supply continues to be affected by Hollywood's recent labor strikes. A listing of closed movie theatres in the state follows these comments.

Generally, more regulations and mandates against the industry will continue to affect the viability of the movie theater industry in the state of Maryland.

### **HB 1363**

HB 1363 as amended was a collaboration between the bill's sponsor, a local advocate, and the association.

For further information, please contact Manny Geraldo (202.924.4386, [mgeraldo@cgagroup.com](mailto:mgeraldo@cgagroup.com)) or Christopher Dews (301.412.25399, [cdews@cgagroup.com](mailto:cdews@cgagroup.com)) of Cornerstone Government Affairs, registered lobbyists for Mid-Atlantic NATO, or Doug Murdoch, Executive Director of Mid-Atlantic NATO (443.895.1446, [doug@midatlanticnato.com](mailto:doug@midatlanticnato.com))





## MARYLAND MOVIE THEATRES - Open Captioning

	Name	Location	Screens
1	Cinemark Egyptian 24 and XD	Hanover	24
2	Regal Majestic 20	Silver Spring	20
3	AMC Dine-In Rio Cinemas 18	Gaithersburg	18
4	AMC Owings Mills 17	Owings Mills	17
5	AMC Loews White Marsh 16	Baltimore	16
6	AMC Montgomery 16	Bethesda	16
7	Regal Salisbury Stadium 16 and RPX	Salisbury	16
8	Regal Valley Mall Movies 16	Hagerstown	16
9	Regal Westview Stadium 16 and IMAX	Frederick	16
10	Cinemark Towson and XD	Towson	15
11	AMC Columbia 14	Columbia	14
12	Cinemark Snowden River	Columbia	14
13	Regal Hyattsville Royale 14	Hyattsville	14
14	Xscape Theaters 14	Brandywine	14
15	Regal Rockville Center Stadium 13	Rockville	13
16	AMC Magic Johnson Capital Centre 12 and IMAX	Largo	12
17	AMC Rivertowne 12	Oxon Hill	12
18	R/C Lexington Exchange Movies 12	California	12
19	Regal Hunt Valley Stadium 12	Hunt Valley	12
20	Regal Laurel Towne Centre 12	Laurel	12
21	Regal Waugh Chapel Stadium 12 & IMAX	Gambrills	12
22	AMC Annapolis Mall 11	Annapolis	11
23	Flagship East Point 10 Cinemas	Baltimore	10
24	Warehouse Cinemas Frederick	Frederick	10
25	Warehouse Cinemas Leitersburg	Hagerstown	10
26	AMC St. Charles Town Center 9	Waldorf	9
27	AMC Wheaton Mall 9	Wheaton	9
28	Cinopolis Gaithersburg 9	Gaithersburg	9
29	Landmark Annapolis Harbour 9	Annapolis	9
30	R/C Westminster 9	Westminster	9
31	AMC Academy 8	Greenbelt	8
32	AMC Loews Centerpark 8	Beltsville	8
33	AMC Security Square 8	Baltimore	8
34	Garrett 8 Cinemas	Oakland	8
35	Golden Star Country Club Cinemas	La Vale	8
36	Horizon Aberdeen	Aberdeen	8
37	Horizon Marley Station Movies	Glen Burnie	8
38	IPic Bethesda Pike & Rose	Bethesda	8
39	Landmark Bethesda Row Cinema	Bethesda	8
<b>39 Locations Currently Covered</b>		<b>Total Screens</b>	<b>473</b>



## MARYLAND MOVIE THEATRES - Open Captioning to be added by HB 1363

40	Flagship Churchville 7	Churchville	7
41	Flagship Harbor East Cinema	Baltimore	7
42	Flagship Ocean City	Ocean City	7
43	Horizon Fallston	Fallston	7
44	Warehouse Cinemas Rotunda	Baltimore	7
45	AMC Loews Lexington Park 6	Lexington Park	6
46	Phoenix Big Cinemas Marlow 6	Temple Hills	6
47	Triton Easton Premier Cinemas	Easton	6
48	Flagship Calvert Village Movies	Prince Frederick	5
49	Flagship Chester 5 Cinemas	Chestertown	5
50	The Charles Theatre	Baltimore	5
51	Gold Coast Theatre	Ocean City	4
52	R/C Hollywood Cinema 4	Arbutus	4
53	The Senator Theatre	Baltimore	4
54	Triton Cambridge Premier Cinema 4	Cambridge	4
<b>15 Locations to be added by HB 1363</b>		<b>Total Additional</b>	<b>84</b>

CLOSED				
1	Fox Theatres Sun & Surf 8	Ocean City, MD	8	<b>Closed September 5, 2022</b>
2	Hoyts West Nursery Cinemas 14	Linthicum Heights, MD	14	<b>Closed January 2023</b>
3	Parkway Theatre	Baltimore	3	<b>Closed early 2023</b>
4	Horizon Cinemas Beltway Movies 8	Fullerton, MD	8	<b>Closed February 2023</b>
5	Regal Cinemas Bowie 14	Bowie, MD	14	<b>Closed April 2023</b>
6	Regal Cinemas Bel Air Stadium 14	Bel Air, MD	14	<b>Closed July 2023</b>
7	Horizon Cinemas Sun Valley 6	Glen Burnie, MD	6	<b>Closed September 2024</b>
8	Regal Cinemas Germantown 14	Germantown, MD	14	<b>Closed December 2024</b>
9	Next Act Cinemas	Pikesville, MD	2	<b>Closed December 2024</b>